The Progressive Review

Nbr 319
October 1993

The indifferent generation

Charles Wiggins

"The Supreme Court just reduced your rights."

I failed to provoke my high school sophomores. Not a hand. Not a face twitched.

Ignoring their stubborn silence, I began the current events portion of the period. Our topic was the recent - Supreme Court decision, Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier. I described how a high school principal in St. Louis had deleted certain articles from the school newspaper, *Spectrum.* The court had agreed that such censorship was constitutional.

Then I read the First Amendment out loud. Still there was silence.

For weeks, this indifference haunted me. Didn't these young Americans care about being censored?

Both Ted Sizer and a *New York Times* reporter have written about this indifference. From his visits to high schools, Sizer found students passive and disengaged from their studies and schools. The *Times* piece extended the dismal picture. Reporting from two studies conducted in the last couple of years, it concluded that students "know less, care less and are less critical of leaders and institutions than young people in the past." The other study reported: "Youth are alarmingly ill-prepared to keep democracy alive in the 1990s and beyond. There is a citizenship crisis." In my classroom I had apparently been witnessing a national phenomenon.

I started teaching twenty-five years ago at a high school in southwestern Connecticut. I remember students gathering in front of the principal's office instead of attending class. A classmate had been "unjustly" suspended. They demanded an explanation. Their timing astounded me. At Columbia University, SDS had just taken over the campus.

Nor was there indifference in the faculty room. Colleagues debated the Supreme Court's Tinker decision, which said that students could wear black arm bands on campus. We also debated the Constitution's twenty-sixth amendment that gave eighteen-year-olds the right to vote. Discussions were fierce; they mattered.

The curriculum even changed. Electives were introduced. Students needed to learn how to make decisions, we argued. Choice was compelling. Youngsters would work harder if they elected their courses, we thought. In other schools teachers were establishing strong student governments.

Today I walk down the halls of another high school and feel the difference. A policeman visits classrooms. His gun seems out of place. The dress code has returned. No hats can be worn inside the building. The National Anthem and the Pledge of Allegiance begin the morning announcements.

Each year electives disappear from the curriculum guide. The student government is no longer independent from the principal's will.

The control takes other forms. Dr. Pavlov, for example, would be pleased with our bells. They speak with such authority. Beginning and ending the forty-five minute periods, they unleash a thousand teenagers into the halls for a four minute passing to the next class. These kids remind me of the bulls at Pampalona. The next bells snap the halls clear and empty. Such is the rhythm of the school day. A great dance of bells and clocks and feet, delivering one hundred teachers and a thousand teenagers to the right spot at the right time.

Students are punished for disobeying the bells. Quintuplicates do the job. These packets of multicolored forms sit on each teacher's desk. When activated, they can play havoc with a student's career. if a student skips a class or arrives late, one is issued. Those colorful copies start circulating throughout the building, filling files and

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The Progressive Review
Bucking the system since 1966

The Progressive Review is published approximately 9 times a year. Formerly the DC Gazette. One year subscription: $15. Two year subscription: $27. Single copies: $2.00. The Review uses the news services of College Press Service, Pacific News Service, New Liberation News Service, and the National Student News Service. The Review monitors both Compuserve and Peacenet.

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Washington DC 20009
202-232-5544
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Peacenet handle: ssmith
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ssmith@igc.org
ISSN 0889-2202

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drawers. One even goes home. A paper trail has been established. The arithmetic begins. Three skips denies a student a quarter credit. Two tardies equal one skip.

Quintuplicates are reinforced by passes. Control tightens. During class time the halls are off limits to students. A youngster needs written permission to be out there. Written authorization from a teacher or administrator is needed to visit the bathroom, office, store or guidance counselor. Without it, the kid is dead. Another quintuplicate circulates.

Between Tinker and Hazelwood, in personal and national history, the ideology of control displaced that of choice -- the Moral Majority instead of the civil rights movement, and an administrator at my school, remembering SDS and Kent State, saying, "Give [students] a chance, and they'll walk all over you."

School boards caught the mood. They started clamping down. School cultures were reshaped. Perceptions of students shifted; no longer were they new citizens learning how to make decisions. Now they were potential anarchists.

Clamping down is shaping today's Indifferent Generation. It is not surprising that some students have turned their backs. They resent the insults, the automated distrust. They dislike being units on a bureaucrat's flow chart. Seniors don't want to be treated like freshmen. Instead of being processed, they yearn to be recognized as individuals.

Clamping down our high schools could be serving a social function, convenient for the status quo. For employers. The government.

But how troublesome for our democratic traditions. And how tragic for all of us.

Preventing ethnic conflicts

Dietrich Fischer

The terrible tragedy in the former Yugoslavia is only one of many similar conflicts among ethnic, linguistic or religious groups around the world, and there exist many more potential intergroup conflicts. How can such tragedies been avoided in the future? What can be done to end current civil wars?

A comparison between two similar conflicts -- in Northern Ireland and in Switzerland -- may give an indication. Both examples involve a Catholic minority feeling oppressed by a Protestant majority. In Ireland, the British government has tried to suppress a separatist movement with military force, so far unsuccessfully. Trying to suppress a conflict by force without addressing the underlying problem is comparable to pressing the lid on a pot to stop the steam from escaping without removing the pot from the heat.

By contrast, a peaceful solution was found to the dispute in Switzerland. The Catholic French-speaking

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minority in the Jura region within the Canton of Bern in Switzerland had long felt regularly overruled in the cantonal parliament by the Protestant German-speaking majority. The simmering resentment erupted in 1950 when Bern rejected a candidate from the Jura for minister of public construction, arguing that as French-speaker he would have difficulty overseeing construction in the mostly German-speaking canton. This infuriated people in the Jura. Street demonstrations were held and a separatist movement formed. The Bernese government kept telling the people of the Jura that they were much better off remaining part of the Canton Bern since they received more subsidies than they paid in taxes. But only the people of the Jura knew which they value more, subsidies or self-determination.

Some cases of politically motivated arson began to appear. Nobody had been killed yet, but if the problem had remained unsolved, it might have escalated into a full-scale civil war.

Finally, the Bernese government agreed to let the people in the contested region decide their own future in a referendum. The first vote was almost evenly split. No matter what the decision, half the affected people would have been deeply dissatisfied. This is similar to what happened in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the Serb minority boycotted the referendum on independence.

The government of Bern organized another referendum in each of six districts. In three districts, a majority preferred forming their own separate canton; three other districts chose to remain in the Canton Bern. Each community along the new borderline was then allowed to vote whether it wanted to switch sides. Some switched. In 1978, the new Canton Jura was welcomed into the Swiss Confederation, essentially ending the conflict.

Democracy is no guarantee that people will always make the optimal decision. But if they make a mistake, they have nobody else to blame and can learn from it. However, if a government forces them to do something against their will, and it turns out wrong, they will hate those authorities. Democracy helps avoid such conflicts.

If such a solution had been tried in Yugoslavia before the current war, dividing the country and its provinces into semi-autonomous cantons according to the preferences of the inhabitants of various regions, war might have been avoided. This solution, allowing people to choose their own future, can still be tried now, but it is probably necessary that an international peacekeeping force, with the means and authority to separate warring factions, guarantees that the outcome of such a vote be respected by all parties. Once violence has erupted, it is much harder to stop it.

Does the international community have the right--or even the duty--to intervene in a country if the rights of minorities are violated? Under ancient Roman law, the head of a household, the "pater familias," had absolute authority over his family. He could sell his children into slavery or beat them to death and the state had no right to intervene in this "internal affair." He could not hurt someone else's children without getting in conflict with the law, but his own family was his to rule. Today we consider that notion absurd. This does not mean that we break into a neighbor's home and tell a family how they should solve their problems whenever we hear an argument. But if a spouse or children are beaten, they must have a right to seek protection from the police if necessary.

At the international level, we still cling to the obsolete notion of absolute state sovereignty. Yet that concept makes no sense if a government is unable to protect its own population from brutal violence such as "ethnic cleansing," or even massacres its own people. We need an international criminal court to which minorities--or in some cases majorities--who cannot find justice within their own countries can resort. We also need a mechanism to enforce such a court's decisions, preferably a new United Nations peace-enforcement unit. Protecting the rights of minorities, at their own request, is totally different from unilateral intervention by one country in the internal affairs of another.

Dietrich Fischer, a Professor at Pace University, is author of Nonmilitary Aspects of Security.

Speaking for the unrepresented

Thomas S. Martin

It has only half a dozen full-time staff members, and a budget approximating the annual income of a high school teacher. Nevertheless it speaks for more than 130 million people around the world, mostly members of ethnic groups that do not appear on maps and are unknown to most Americans. It has sent mediators to Abkhazia. It has been praised on the floor of Congress and denounced in the UN General Assembly. It advocates values and objectives that might appropriately be called "post-Western." At its meetings Masai warriors sit across the table from Tibetan lamas or turbaned Sikhs. It is the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization.

Minority movements for devolution and decentralization have been around for a long time, but three developments in the 1970s changed the rules of the game and produced a shift from romantic nostalgia to dead-serious activism. The first event was the great stride

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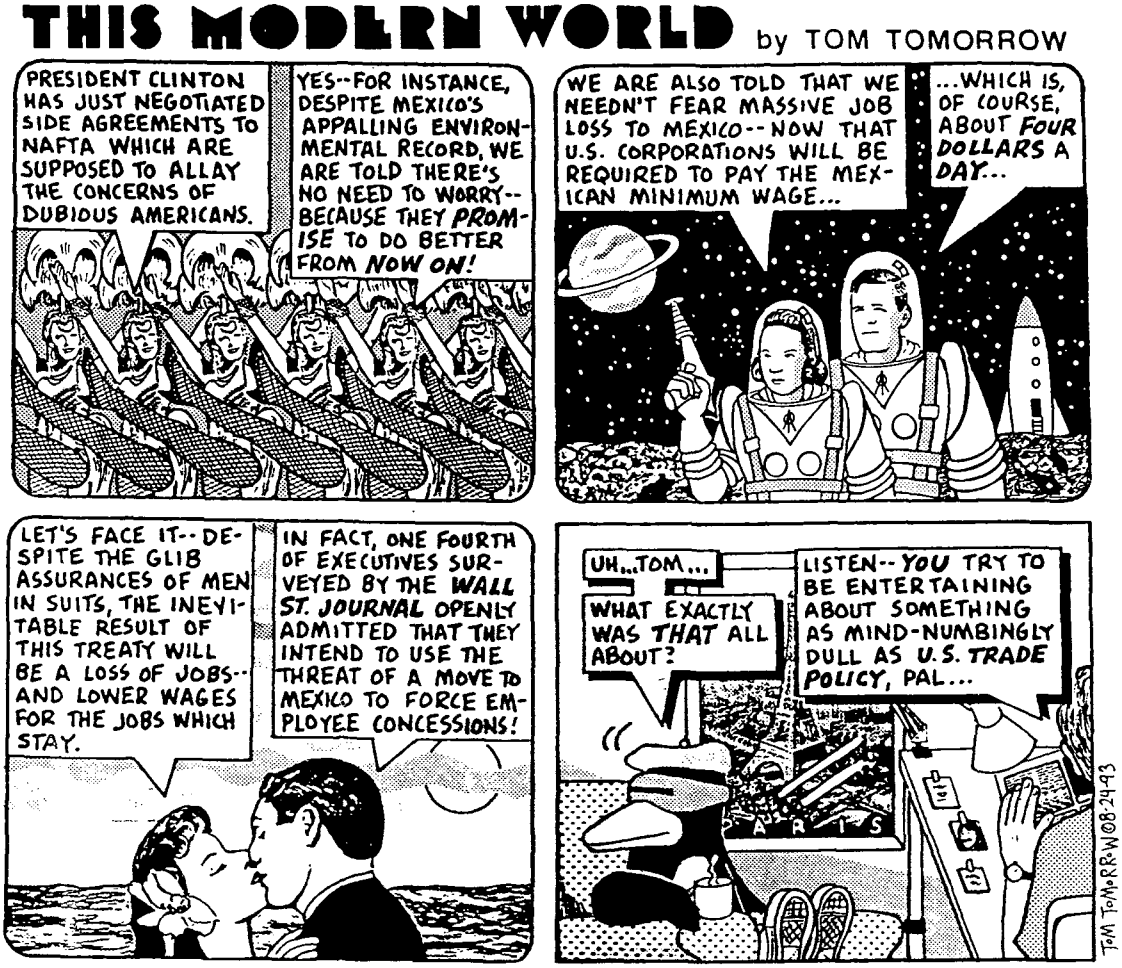
THIS MODERN WORLD by TOM TOMORROW
PRESIDENT CLINTON HAS JUST NEGOTIATED SIDE AGREEMENTS TO NAFTA WHICH ARE SUPPOSED TO ALLAY THE CONCERNS OF DUBIOUS AMERICANS.
YES--FOR INSTANCE, DESPITE MEXICO'S APPALLING ENVIRONMENTAL RECORD, WE ARE TOLD THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY--BECAUSE THEY PROMISE TO DO BETTER FROM NOW ON!
WE ARE ALSO TOLD THAT WE NEEDN'T FEAR MASSIVE JOB LOSS TO MEXICO--NOW THAT U.S. CORPORATIONS WILL BE REQUIRED TO PAY THE MEXICAN MINIMUM WAGE...
...WHICH IS, OF COURSE, ABOUT FOUR DOLLARS A DAY...
LET'S FACE IT--DESPITE THE GLIB ASSURANCES OF MEN IN SUITS, THE INEVITABLE RESULT OF THIS TREATY WILL BE A LOSS OF JOBS--AND LOWER WAGES FOR THE JOBS WHICH STAY.
IN FACT, ONE FOURTH OF EXECUTIVES SURVEYED BY THE WALL ST. JOURNAL OPENLY ADMITTED THAT THEY INTEND TO USE THE THREAT OF A MOVE TO MEXICO TO FORCE EMPLOYEE CONCESSIONS!
UH...TOM...
WHAT EXACTLY WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?
LISTEN--YOU TRY TO BE ENTERTAINING ABOUT SOMETHING AS MIND-NUMBINGLY DULL AS U.S. TRADE POLICY, PAL...
TOM TOMORROW 8-24-93

toward European unity represented by the Treaty of Rome and its ensuing agreements, most notably the Single European Act. In the 1960s the drive toward European unity had faltered; then it was taken over by multinational corporations, who saw in it a capitalist utopia, a vast unified market that could compete with the United States and Japan. Many Europeans saw only the erosion and McDonaldization of their own cultures as later would people on other continents as they awakened to similar hazards.

The second event was the rise of ecological awareness, which quickly took on a radical political hue. The movement sensed that destruction of the environment is inextricably tied to the economics of growth and the politics of domination. Even a cursory study of indigenous and decentralized cultures reveals that their way of life is much easier on the planet and its resources.

The third event was the explosion of new communications technologies: computers, copy machines, and the like. Here is a powerful irony: the global corporate economy, in its never-ending quest to create new consumer needs, actually invented the technology by which its enemies have been able to organize and communicate their ideas.

In 1976, concerned about the centralizing potential of the European Community, a group of liberal and radical politicians met in Copenhagen to discuss ways of resisting the trend. Prime Minister Pol Schlüter of Denmark presciently noted that new information technology could promote decentralization and individual freedom. This Conference on a Europe of Regions, which has continued to meet in one form or another, also recognized the aspirations of such disenfranchised people as the Lapps and the Frisians. In 1985 the Assembly of European Regions grew out of the conference, with 112 founders, some of them states but most of them provinces, cities or ethnic regions. While it does not encourage full independence, the assembly has called for devolution of authority, which it calls "subsidiarity." Taking it as given that a united Europe will soon emerge, the assembly hopes to counterbalance its inevitable centralizing forces. It has clearly influenced the more radical UNPO organizers.

UNPO held its third General Assembly in January, and the membership has risen to thirty-nine. The organization grew out of a discussion in 1989 between Lodi Gyari, foreign minister of the exiled Dalai Lama, and Estonian professor Linnart Mäll. Together they approached Washington attorney Michael van Walt, who had represented Tibet's interests at the UN Human Rights Commission. The trio did not have to go in search of unrepresented nations; they were quickly besieged by frustrated representatives from every continent. The

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organization was formally inaugurated at The Hague in 1991. Four of the founding members - - Estonia, Latvia, Armenia, and Georgia -- have since gained independence. From the beginning UNPO has been largely driven by activists from the former Soviet empire and from Tibet, with access to money and to the media. But the presence of little known indigenous peoples is steadily growing. Some are genuine victims of genocidal policies.

When the mainstream press deigns to notice UNPO, they refer to it as a "mini United Nations." Stories are usually at once patronizing and flattering; no one appears to take the organization too seriously. But it represents the wave of the future, and it is no UN. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali himself pointed to the difference when he admonished the "micronationalists" not to "separate but to gather together, as the members of the European Community have done." The comparison is revealing. The EC, like the United Nations itself, is not a peoples' organization.

Both are forums in which governments (mostly oppressive) and corporations (almost always rapacious) work to systematize and streamline the exploitation of the rest of the world. The members of UNPO are often their prime victims. They have organized to fight for the rights of ordinary people and of nature, not to foster the expansion of the global capitalist economy. UNPO's own literature describes it as an "alternative United Nations," but one open only to underdogs, not rulers who are represented in New York. It solicits "occupied nations, indigenous peoples, minorities, and even oppressed majorities, who have no official representation in the international community." The governing principles sound like those of the United Nations, but with some key differences.

Non-violence is a cardinal point. So is protection of the environment, an area in which the UN has proved particularly vulnerable to corporate pressure. Intolerance of all shades is rejected, and much of the organization's work concerns human rights issues. The real goal, however, is "the right to self-determination and democracy for all." The UN Charter calls for "friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples." When he advised "self-determination" in his Fourteen Points, Woodrow Wilson similarly intended it to be exercised only in the form of national sovereignty. The League of Nations and the UN took the same position. As a result San Marino, with 20,000 people, has a vote in the General Assembly; Kurdistan, with perhaps twenty million, does not. UN membership is open to "peace-loving states;" members are forbidden to use or threaten force "against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state." They may not "intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state," a clause which effectively prevents any aid or recognition for minorities or indigenous people. Moreover, the charter explicitly recognizes the principle of colonialism. States with "responsibilities for the administration of territories whose people have not yet attained a full measure of self-government" are enjoined "to take due account of the political aspirations of the peoples," which is hardly a clarion call for emancipation. Indeed the UN actually created new colonies after World War II, in the form of "trust territories" taken away from Japan. Article 73 requires colonial powers to submit reports on the administration of their possessions, but most long ago stopped doing so, on the grounds that the territory in question was not a colony but an integral part of the state. A 1970 General Assembly resolution calling colonialism an "international crime" had no appreciable effect on these practices. Certainly the world's great colonial empires have been largely dismantled since 1945, but the work was done by the colonized peoples themselves, not by the UN. And economic colonialism is actually promoted, not thwarted, by the UN's various specialized agencies.

Take the case of Tibet. The Himalayan kingdom has been systematically exploited by the Chinese Communist government for more than thirty years. Hundreds of thousands of people have died, vast irreplaceable forests are gone (contributing to the flooding of Bangla Desh), and much of the religious and literary heritage has been destroyed. But China is a powerful member of the UN, which rarely takes note of the Tibetan genocide. Of course most delegates to the UN, and the governments that send them, are aware of the situation and probably deplore it. But they cannot risk offending the Chinese delegation. A similar situation obtains in East Timor, a tiny former Portuguese colony in the East Indies that has been occupied and devastated by Indonesia. The UN's expert on torture and genocide, after a study of the enclave, reported that although "basic human rights, including the right to physical and mental integrity, are guaranteed by the Indonesian State philosophy and legislation," it "seems questionable" whether those guarantees are always respected. Questionable indeed. One-sixth of the Timorese population has died as a result of the oppression.

Perhaps the most hypocritical case is that of the Palestinians. Abuse of residents of the West Bank is loudly decried, since most UN members do not like Israel; at the same time, the Kuwaiti persecution of its Palestinian residents after the Gulf War was ignored, since most members like Kuwait. The list goes on endlessly. While the politics may be understandable and even unavoidable in such cases, the priorities are obvious. They are the priorities of the politics of the failed western paradigm.

The organizers of UNPO, by contrast, envision a politics of equality and human compassion. The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization has an opportunity to change radically our perceptions of such key ideas as sovereignty and nationhood. During the past few centuries of western domination, the world has come to define "nations" in terms of domination and hierarchy, majority rule, centralization and minority oppression. A

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"nation" has a single sovereign authority with unlimited powers; definite boundaries that usually have no connection with ethnic and ecological reality; a war machine whose dual purpose is to intimidate its own people and punish its enemies; and a policy of competition rather than cooperation with other nation-states. But the days of western supremacy are numbered, and we are rediscovering alternative political ideas that are more in harmony with the way the Earth actually works. UNPO has already begun the hard work of redefinition by insisting that "nations" are made up of people, not territories, and that they themselves have the sole right to determine who and what they are.

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Volunteering ain't what it used to be

David Hansen, writing in *The Other Texan*, noted recently that "national service may some day be like driver's licenses in some states, where you have to be attending high school or you can't have a license. This could be the first step toward a new type of conscription, with the ultimate goal of subsiding big business by paying minimum wages to an army of forced volunteers -- a kind of a third-worlding of the US service economy."

This vision might seem paranoic were it not for clear willingness of Clinton and other American leaders to trade off rights and benefits for obligations and regimentation. The potential for variations on this theme is boggling. For example, the state of Wisconsin has introduced a form of "workfare" that includes requirements that some recipients attend motivational workshops and another rule that witholds part of the monthly welfare payments to parents whose children are chronic truants. As for national service, consider this:

Before you write this off as paranoia, consider this:

- From the beginning of discussions of national service there has been -- and remains -- congressional support for a mandatory program.
- An increasing number of public schools are *requiring* community service. Although this is being challenged in the courts on the ground that it represents involuntary servitude, it suggests the increasing willingness of our society to draft the young into programs it deems beneficial.

Even as a voluntary activity, some the implications of the Clinton national service trust fund were glossed over in the rush to pass the enabling legislation. For example:

- Over half of all American adults already volunteer an average of four hours a week as it is and nearly two thirds of youths 12-17 give at least three hours -- for an estimated total of 2.1 billion hours annually. According to Pacific News Service, the LA city govenment has more than 14,000 volunteers. The town of El Cerrito, CA, is run by 100 paid employees and nearly 500 volunteers. When Lafayette CA got into fiscal trouble it asked for help from volunteer accountant and management consultants who came up with a plan to save about a tenth of the city's budget. So what exactly is the purpose of attempting to nationalize all this activity, converting what was formerly *community service* into *national service?*
- There is a strong argument to be made that many volunteer agencies need not more volunteers but more facilities, equipment and logistical support to help them function. The per-parrticipant cost of the Clinton program will be about four times the minimum wage. Further, although available to non-college students, the program will clearly serve as a subsidy to members of the country's future elite.

National service was presented to the country as an unmitigated good, and even the Republicans could effectively challenge it only on cost grounds. Undoubtedly, the national service trust fund will support worthy projects, provide valuable and, in some cases, transformational experiences for those involved. Yet whatever its salutary effects on individual participants and those they assist, the national service program will have little effect on the country's social and economic problems, will not greatly increase the number of America's community service volunteers, nor is likely to create a rush to public service careers.

National service was nonetheless early destined for a life much grander than its actual product could warrant because of its ubiquitous symbolic utility. To the young the service program offered a chance to do something meaningful for society. To the country it was an outward and visible -- and inexpensive -- sign of caring, devoid of such complications as the potential political and economic empowerment of the poor that undermined support for VISTA. For the Clinton administration and congressional supporters it represented a commitment to social values, concern for the poor, and a bit of regimentation for the purportedly unruly and undirected young. One even caught a whiff of a generation that had avoided the draft using their children to atone for their own lack of national service.

The Clinton plan clearly seeks echoes of the Peace Corps. But the Peace Corps was the product of a far less cynical and manipulative American government. And even it was eventually perverted, as when Ronald Reagan announced that 900 Peace Corps volunteers in the field would implement the Caribbean Basin Initiative, three quarters of which involved military aid to the government of El Salvador.

It is noteworthy that national service is itself not without military overtones. The Pentagon has America's cities in its sights. Senator Sam Nunn, chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, early proposed using military

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specialists to help urban and private agencies on city problems. Nunn's urban pacification program would "assist civilian authorities in addressing the critical fundamentals upon which a healthy society and economy are built."

A number of the new-style community service programs upon which Clinton smiles include such para-military appurtenances as early morning calisthenics, an activity that Jane Addams and her social work descendents might find a trifle strange, but which lend a touch of 90's style machismo. Some of the national service funds would go to pay for police officers and buried in the scheme is a plan for a Civilian Community Corps that would further federal efforts at urban pacification by having ex-military personnel run boot camps for community service teams. A few have raised questions about the civil liberties implications of such militarization of urban policy, among them former Boston Mayor Ray Flynn. More typical, however, was the bland parallel drawn by St. Paul's mayor Jim Scheibel between US military intervention in Somalia and military involvement in American cities.

The president and his supporters have hardly been modest in describing the program. Clinton said, "National service will take on our nation's most pressing unmet needs while empowering a new generation to serve as leaders for change." Al From, president of the conservative Democratic Leadership Council even took credit for reinventing civic spirit:

"National service, the cornerstone of the New Democrat agenda, replaces the two dominant ethics of the 1980s -- every man for himself and something for nothing -- with a simple philosophy that calls for a new spirit of civic obligation and participation in America."

While the national service plan will have undoubtedly have beneficial effects, to declare it a cornerstone of one's domestic policy reveals the paucity of the New Democrat agenda. Poverty, joblessness, the urban health and housing crises are not the product of too few college sophomores giving to the community. And it is hardly encouraging to find Mary McGrory declaring the program "the best of Bill Clinton," and blandly asserting that "if successful, it could demonstrate a new Democratic philosophy, giving people to problems rather than money." How people -- however well motivated -- provide housing, health services, food and jobs to America's cities without money remains a mystery.

Making us all better persons has considerable appeal to some politicians and policy grubbers these days. It will provide grist for interminable rhetoric about the nobility of the young, matched only by that praising the wisdom of those in public office brilliant enough to have thought of the idea in the first place. Cheaply virtuous, and superficially non-ideological, it is the sort of program that Washington loves most. -- *Sam Smith*

Morton Mintz and the Advocacy Institute have uncovered the unpleasant truth that the ACLU has been taking money from the tobacco industry for some time -- and never told its members. Mintz found that the civil liberties group received a half million dollars from Philip Morris between 1987 and 1992. The ACLU has also helped the tobacco industry in its fight against advertising restrictions. At one point the ACLU's Morton Halperin told a Senate hearing, "there is simply no evidence that tobacco advertising increases the level of smoking."

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FLOTSAM & JETSAM

How I got fired as a liberal

I have recently been officially fired as a liberal, ignominiously stripped of my rank as an executive vice president of Americans for Democratic Action, keeper of the holy grail of liberalism.

When I first heard that this was going to happen -- shortly before entering the hospital for surgery -- I was stunned. For all other executive vice presidents the only apparent grounds for termination had been death. Did the leadership of ADA know something that I didn't?

No, it was just that ADA had decided to end years of populist insurgency in its ranks, simulating the Democratic Leadership Council's successful efforts at quashing dissent within the Democratic Party. I and a number of other board members who had failed to hew to the party line were to be purged. Liberalism would once again be safe from the winds of change. Included in our number was a former national treasurer, the present chair of the Chicago chapter, the former chair of Youth for Democratic Action.

About a year and a half ago we had formed a progressive caucus within ADA. The paleoliberals in the leadership took kindly to neither the idea nor the irony of the name. To be sure, we were not openly accused of political incorrectitude. At first we weren't accused of anything. Later -- and only after the fact, when Washington's *City Paper* got wind of the purge -- we were charged with being "disruptive troublemakers." I was personally accused of acting like both John the Baptist and Svengali, a truly remarkable blend of virtues and vices. In fact, our troublemaking had consisted largely of writing letters and introducing resolutions the ADA leadership didn't like. Apparently in ADA, dissent is considered a political dirty trick.

I was initially quite aggravated at the developments but then it occurred to me that being a certified ex-liberal had a certain appeal. I fantasized about being called before the House UnMainstream Activities Committee to testify on how cells of heavily armed liberals had undermined the first six months of the Clinton administration, how gays were planning a mass assault on the Morman Tabernacle, or about next season's secret line up of TV series aimed at perverting family values. I could only fantasize, however, because the truth is that liberals these days don't do much at all. Contrary to Rush Limbaugh's allegations and Senator Boren's anxieties, liberalism in the past decade or so has been marked by its ineffectiveness. Certainly this had been true of ADA, the leading multi-issue liberal organization in the country. ADA's most notable achievements had been its annual rating of Congress and its Christmastide toy safety survey. Now even the toy survey is gone.

To some of us in the organization, ADA's ineffectiveness seemed unfortunate and unnecessary. We naively assumed that the group would be open to new ideas and strategic approaches. Nothing proved further than the truth. Even when an alternative drug policy was twice approved by a national convention over the almost apoplectic opposition of ADA's leadership, the matter was simply filed away so that no one outside the organization would ever hear about it. As the Texas politician said, I don't mind losing when I lose, but I hate losing when I win.

The ADA establishment - some which goes back to the organization's founding in the late 1940s -- is as adept at internal judo as it is lethargic in political action. Thus an extraordinary amount of effort is spent on maintaining political correctness within the group while the nation drifts undisputed towards the right. Some of the organization's leaders bring to mind Charles Hodge, who taught at Princeton Seminary in the early 19th century. Hodge boasted that in his fifty years of teaching he had never broached a new or original idea.

To be sure, as in a bad movie, occasional cameo scenes bring things to life. For example, ADA helped to sink the Bork nomination and has been working hard on single-payer health insurance. Many of ADA's other positions are admirable, although one often admires them somewhat in the sense that one admires a restored Studebaker.

ADA seems largely unaware of the depth of the growing revulsion against an overexpensive, overauthoritarian and overcentralized government. It ignores such major new ideological influences as the Green movement It feels threatened whenever anyone suggests a modification of the standard liberal canon. Most of all, it no longer fulfills its former role as a political catalyst. Not only is no one afraid of ADA today; many haven't even heard of it, or will tell you that "I thought that died years ago." This is sad and, given an annual budget of about $750,000,, doesn't have to be.

But the organization has other priorities. What it seems to want, above all, is to retain its status as the official voice of liberals in Washington, even if this status has some of the limited elan, say, of being an alleged Russian count in Manhattan. To challenge liberal orthodoxy would risk losing caste with its orthodox liberal allies in Congress and losing funding from its orthodox labor backers. In fact, ADA is even afraid of challenging the Clinton administration. It implicitly perceives that it can not regain its former political stature without risking its social position. It is better to leave things alone. Thus this once vibrant organization rests on the political landscape, as Disraeli once said of the opposition bench, like a range of exhausted volcanoes. --Sam Smith

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WEATHER REPORT

Medi-scam cont'd

An unusual left-right coalition has developed around two of the biggest issues of the day, which helps to explain some the frenzied attempts by the Clinton administration to find a safe middle ground. With labor and Perot lined up against NAFTA and with Clinton's proposed medical oligopoly for the largest insurance companies facing opposition from progressives, doctors and the smaller insurers, there may not be any safe middle.

For example, while Clinton has finally recognized that many Americans aren't ready to be pushed into an HMO controlled by one of the big insurance companies, he is still planning to penalize doctors and patients who insist on maintaining the traditional fee for service system and professional independence.

If fee-for-service is so undesirable, one wonders why Clinton doesn't likewise propose legal maintenance organizations, thus eliminating fee-for-service in the legal profession. The answer in part is that Hillary Clinton, Webb Hubbell and the rest of the gang from the Rose law firm would never stand for the sort of professional interference that the Clintons are trying to impose on medicine. The absurdity of the Clinton proposal can be seen by imagining a a similar system under which paralegals hired by the major insurance companies to supervise "managed legal care" would tell senior partners of law firms whether they must settle a case or continue fighting it in court.

Not since Bob McNamara, joined by a bunch of Harvard professors on sabbatical, tried to suppress the Vietcong has so much intelligence in this capital been used so poorly. The Clintons' health plan is overflowing with flaws, but several should be kept front and center:

- The proposed transfer of much of the health industry to a half dozen major insurance companies, if approved, would make the deregulation of the savings and loan industry look like a technical error. What the Clintons are suggesting could well be the greatest economic scandal of our lifetime.
- The Clintons' plan borrows heavily from the some of the most odious trends in existing healthcare. It accepts the concept of preferred providers -- a limited pool of doctors and specialists from which a patient can choose -- even though insurance companies are currently using the power to list or de-list providers to exert undue influence, such as telling mental health specialists to prescribe drugs

Contraindications

- Although the Clintons' health care plan appears to allow the traditional arrangement between doctor and patient to continue -- for an added price -- there is a loophole. A purchasing "alliance" could eliminate fee-for service if the plan "is not financially viable in the area" or there is "insufficient provider interest" in the plan.

- Writing in *The American Prospect* for Spring 1993, David U. Himmelstein, Sidney Wolfe and Steffie Woolhandler gave a good thumbnail description of the managed competition:

> Stripped of rhetoric, managed competition is a plan to save the biggest private insurance companies and sacrifice patients' rights to choose their doctor.

Making their indictment in more detail, the writers charged that it would:

-- Use tax penalties to push all but the wealthy into stripped down, basic group health plans.

-- Deprive most patients of the right to choose their own doctor and hospital, completing the transformation of American medicine from one-on-one doctor-patient relationships to a medical system controlled by enormous corporate bureaucracies.

-- Assure a multi-tiered health care system, separate and unequal.

-- Perpetuate the private health insurance industry the principal cause of the crisis.

-- Fail to contain costs.

- Dr. Bruce Yaffe told the *New York Times* that under managed care, medicine is being transformed from doctor and patient vs. disease to doctor vs. patient vs. insurance company.

- The idea of HMOs was dreamed up by Paul Ellwood in the early 1970s and sold to Richard Nixon as an alternative to Ted Kennedy's single-payer legislation. If the name Ellwood seems vaguely familiar it's because he convened the notorious Jackson Hole discussions that provided much of the inspiration for Clinton's medi-scam.

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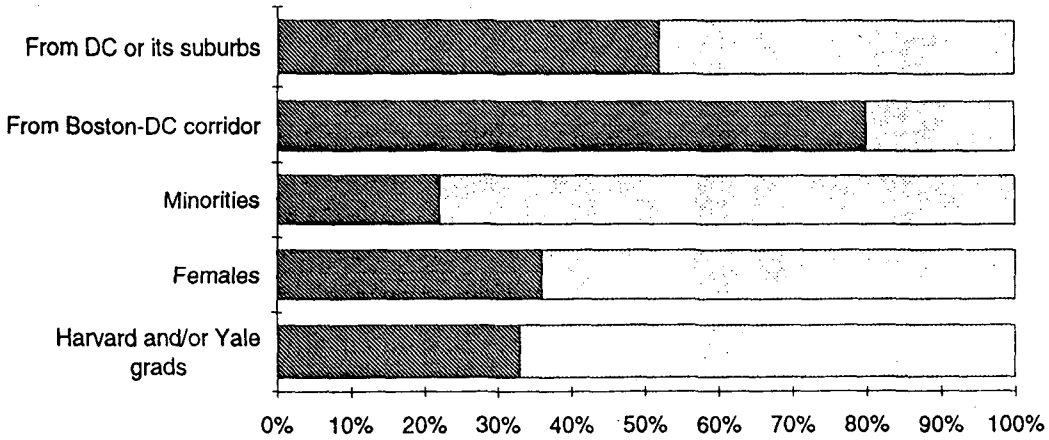
Looking like America cont'd: Clinton's first 518 appointees



Source: Knight-Ridder Newspapers

rather than to continue more costly treatment sessions. And the Clinton plan also embraces managed care, under which doctors' decisions are second-guessed -- often by less professionally qualified persons who have seen neither the patient nor the full medical record. With the plan's emphasis on cost-containment, the present managed care deficiencies can only be expected to get worse. As Rep. Pete Stark put it, "They will say, I'm sorry, you have lumpy breasts, but we're not going to perform surgery,' or 'You have a bad hip, here's some codeine rather than a hip replacement.'"

- *The Clinton approach has not been tried anyplace* in the world. Single-payer -- the alternative that the mainstream media is loathe to talk about -- has been tried and it works.

Perhaps the best way to visualize what the Clintons hath wrought is to imagine not only Blue Cross-Blue Shield charging you for insurance and sending you inscrutable explanations of why the patients' share of the bill is more than you ever imagined, but Blue-Cross-Blue Shield owning your local hospital, employing your physicians and all your specialists, and telling them how to care for you. If that idea appeals to you, by all means support the Clinton plan. If it seems faintly absurd, tell your legislator you want single-payer.

Just politics

Although the mainstream press has reported that Italy has scrapped proportional representation that is not the case. Instead, it has adopted a complicated version of the mixed method used by Germany where half the legislature is elected on a district plurality basis and the other half by PR. The rules for the PR half are designed to compensate any parties that failed to get fair representation in the district elections.

Under Italy's system, 25% will be elected by PR. In addition, Italy became the first country to require all parties to present gender-balanced party lists for these "add-on" seats. This was done because it seemed likely that women would fare poorly in the district elections.

Meanwhile the provisional new constitution for South Africa calls for an unspecified form of PR, Mexico and Japan are considering mixed systems and Ray Flynn, just before leaving Boston's city hall to become an ambassador, called for the local school board to be elected by cumulative voting.

The media watchdog FAIR notes that David Gergen in July of 1990 wrote a column that criticized the work of a NEA-funded artist solely because he used his work "to encourage education, understand and eventual acceptance" of the gay community. Gergen referred to this as "wanton destruction of a nation's values" and "decadence and blasphemy."

Land of the free

Don't look for Janet Reno to tackle such unfinished business as BCCI. Says one activist lawyer who has met with it: "She's closing her ears to all that." Reno already appears to have taken a fall in the BNL case, agreeing to a plea bargain by Christopher P. Drogoul, the former Atlanta manager of the Italian bank who claimed that his Rome bosses as well as US intelligence officials were aware of his loans to Iraq that were used to arm that country. Reno has declared that she does not think the case was mishandled by the Bush administration, despite a federal judge's charge that Drogoul and his Atlanta bank colleagues were "pawns and bit players" in a secret deal to provide arms for Iraq.

And Reno won't be much help sorting out the growing number of questions about the Waco massacre. Among these are:

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- How come the affidavit used to justify a search of the Branch Davidian compound includes an alleged quote by David Koresh about the LA riots uttered three weeks before the riots happened?
- What about videotapes of the scene that allegedly display such anomalies as fire jetting out of tank guns shortly before the compound went up in flames? And of men apparently removing fireproof hoods and then calmly walking away from the conflagration?
- Why was the scene bulldozed shortly after the fire, thus preventing an evidential search?
- What was the probable cause for the attack on the compound? The *Washington Times* quotes a former AFT agent who said the affidavit, kept secret during the siege, alleged only 'technical violations' of federal gun laws that "could and should have been handled by a telephone call."

Initial reports suggest that the Clinton administration is doing little to reform the Bush administration's notorious urban pacification program known as "Weed and Seed." In theory, the program is meant to weed out the worst criminal element in a community and then seed the neighborhood with social services. In fact, social services make up only a fifth of the budget and the program is primarily used as one more weapon in America's armed struggle with its inner cities. Even the social services have police purposes and involvement. Eight out of ten social service proposals by Seattle, for example, were rejected for being soft on crime or not having a big enough police component.

Crossroads Magazine recently reported:

"Among Weed and Seed's most sinister elements is the FAST (Federal Alternatives to State Trial) prosecution system. This program allows for streamlined, high velocity prosecutions and requires lengthy minimum sentences for even first-time offenders busted in targeted areas. "

Janet Reno has praised Weed and Seed and a representative of the program told *Crossroads* that it's been "business as usual" since the Democrats took over.

Hardly a murmur in the media when the Senate Judiciary Committee held a secret session on "sensitive questions" that may have come up in background investigations of Ruth Bader Ginsburg. If this practice had been in effect earlier we never would have learned about the charms and sensitivity of Justice Clarence Thomas.

Transportation

A new type of car dealership in Japan offers only a few display models. Customers use a computer to "design" their own car, choosing from options on the screen. The car is then delivered in five days. *[Fuel Reformation]*

Drug busts

Baltimore Mayor Kurt Schmoke, one of the few elected officials to question the War on Drugs has invited mayors and representatives from 75 nations to come to his city in November to discuss international drug abuse.

Students at the University of Massachusetts voted two to one to declare all laws prohibiting the use of majriuana null and void in a nonbinding initiative last spring.

Furthermore. . .

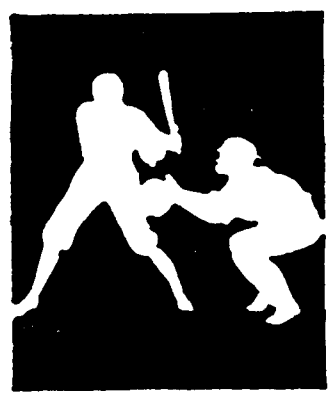
While the Pentagon, Clinton and Sam Nunn ruminated on the potential dangers to military morale and readiness of having homosexuals in uniform, little has been heard of a 1992 study that found 41% of the surveyed military members admitting to being heavy alcohol users.

FEEDBACK

Sam Dunn writes of DC's Raymond School Little League team, which he coaches:

In March we began, as usual, the spring ritual of teaching, not baseball, but basic strategies for dealing with adjacent human beings; i.e. it is not always necessary to respond to one's own failure by knocking the hell out of the guy next to you if he's smaller than you, or by hurling a bottle or a rock at him if he's bigger; i.e., there are other ways to deal with a friend's failure than to jeer gleefully at his inadequacy; i.e., it's not necessary to point out, every half hour, that a classmate's mother is a drunk or that his father is in jail or that his sister is pregnant. This is always our first order of business cloaked as it might be in the guise of teaching baseball. Baseball is the ideal forum for teaching the art of failure because failure is endemic to the sport; the very best at any level fail to get a hit seven out of ten times.

The team ended with a 7-7 record.



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ROADSIGNS

Drugs

Federal penalty for possession of 5.1 grams of crack cocaine, a form of cocaine favored by black users: Five years without parole.

Federal penalty for possession of 5.1 grams of powdered cocaine, a form of cocaine favored by white users Probation.

Number of states now under court order to reduce prison overcrowding and other unconstitutional prison conditions: 40

Ecology

Number of environmental criminal law suits filed by local officials during the first six months of 1992: 882.

Number of environmental criminal law suits filed by federal officials during the right years between 1983 and 1991: 838.

Justice

Percent of time Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg sided with liberal Judge Patricia Wald while on the US Court of Appeals: 55%

Percent of time Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg sided with conservative Judge Robert Bork while on the US Court of Appeals: 85%

Media

Number of news conferences held at the National Press Club in 1992: 1400

Number of stories in the *New York Times* in the six months after the election that mentioned managed competition: 65

Number of stories in the *New York Times* in the six months after the election that mentioned single-payer national health insurance: 5

Number of journalists who attended the G-7 summit: 11,000

SOURCES

Drugs: Rainbow Coalition, National Prison Project **Ecology:** Environmental Action **Justice:** *Legal Times* **Media:** *Washington Post, Extra!, Village Voice,*

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